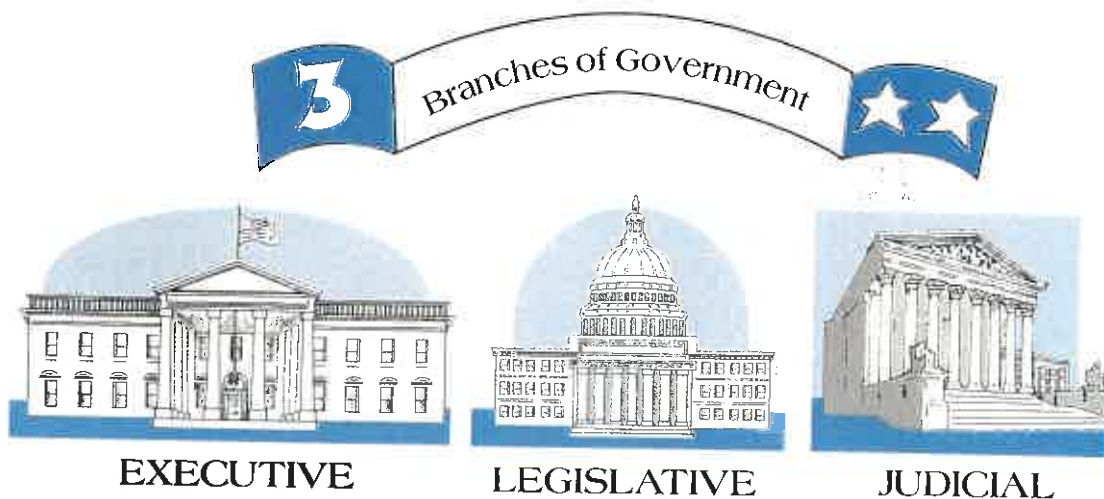

Three Branches of Government



The Legislative Branch

The first branch created by the Constitution is the *legislative branch*, called *Congress*, which makes the laws. People from each state elect individuals to represent them in Congress.

The Constitution divides the Congress into two groups called *houses*. One house is the *House of Representatives*, the other is the *U.S. Senate*.

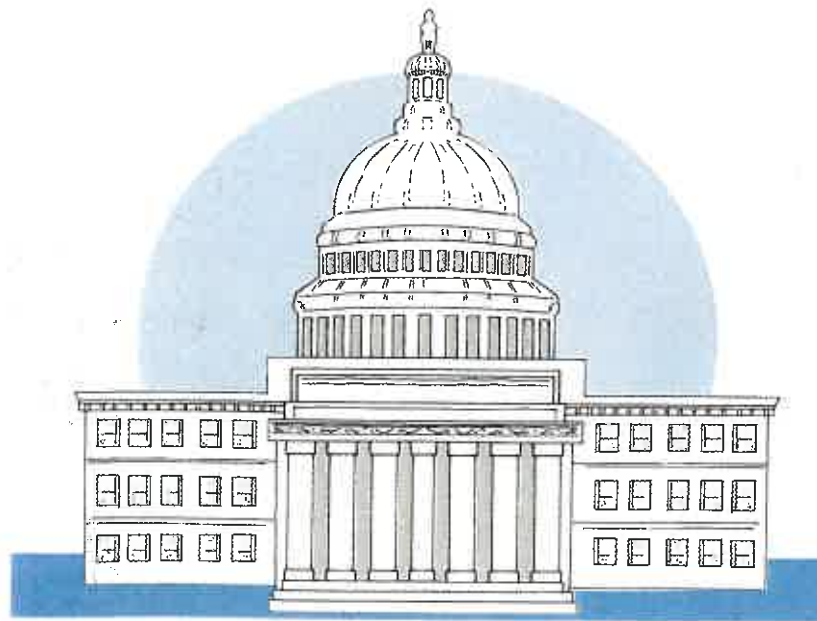
The Constitution says that only Congress, and not the states, can make laws about money in the United States. Because of these laws, all of the states now use the same money. If you have a U.S. dollar, you can spend it in any state in the country.

The Constitution also gives Congress power to make laws about businesses that affect more than one state. This allows

farmers and business people to sell their products in any state and for people to travel from state to state to do business. For example, if you have a favorite type of snack food in your state, there is a good chance you will find it in other states.

The Constitution gives Congress power to create an army and a navy. It also says Congress, and not the states, can declare war on other countries.

The Constitution gives Congress power to make laws about *taxes*. Taxes are the money the government collects from the people to help it do its jobs, such as paying the soldiers and sailors and buying equipment for them. The Constitution also says Congress, and not the states, can charge taxes on products that people sell to other countries and that people buy from other countries.



LEGISLATIVE



The Executive Branch

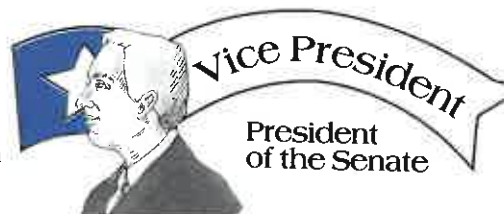
The second branch created by the Constitution is the *executive branch*. The leader of this branch is the *president* of the United States, who is also called the *chief executive*. The Constitution gives the president the job of carrying out the laws that Congress makes. Many people work in the executive branch to help do this job. For example, people who work in the executive branch make sure people obey the laws about business and money.



Chief Executive;
Commander in Chief

- Department of the Treasury
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Energy
- Department of Defense
- Department of Health and Human Services

- Department of Justice
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Education



President
of the Senate



The Constitution also says the president is the *commander in chief* of the army, navy, and others in the military. The president also has the power to meet with leaders of other countries and to make agreements with them.

The Constitution creates the job of vice president. The vice president takes the president's place in case anything happens to the president. The vice president is also president of the Senate. That means the vice president gets to vote in the Senate when there is a tie.

The Judicial Branch

The third branch created by the Constitution is the *judicial branch*. It contains the *Supreme Court of the United States* and other U.S. courts. (States also have their own courts.) Courts settle disagreements about the law and explain what



U.S. Courts
Judges



Supreme Court
Justices

the law means. Courts also decide whether people have disobeyed the law and how to punish people who have. The people in charge of making these decisions are called *judges* (and are called *justices* on the Supreme Court).

While we sometimes call the branches the first branch, the second branch, and the third branch, this does not mean they are ranked in order of importance. Each branch has equal importance under the Constitution.

The Constitution gives the three branches of the U.S. government powers that the government under the Articles of Confederation did not have. The Constitution says that it and the laws of the United States are “the supreme Law of the Land.” This means that the laws of the U.S. government have power over and above the laws of the states.

